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OLC 70-0714

6 October 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Chairman L. Mendel Rivers
on Cienfuegos

1. In accordance with the Director's instructions, this afternoon I met with Chairman Rivers, House Armed Services Committee, and Acting Chief Counsel Frank M. Slatinshek in response to Rivers' request to see the Cienfuegos photographs.

2. I began by explaining that in showing the Chairman these photographs and briefing him on their significance we were acting in violation of instructions from higher authority and I must ask for the Chairman's firm assurances that he would guarantee our protection. He said "I never stand for anybody telling me what to say" but so far as my request was concerned he "had always protected us and he always would so we needn't worry about that."

3. After I had displayed and explained the photographs (some of which Rivers insisted on interpreting in his own way to support certain conclusions he had arrived at by some undisclosed process), Rivers asked me if there was any doubt in my mind that "the Russians are moving in there."

4. I said I thought this was clear but there was still a number of unanswered questions. I explained that even if nuclear submarines were to be based at Cienfuegos we didn't yet know what types they would be or what missions they would perform. I noted that some construction observed was quite recent and it was too soon to tell how elaborate the facilities would be when completed.

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5. In connection with some of the discussion about the barges which had been shipped from Kola Inlet to Cienfuegos, Slatinshek had a folio of excellent closeup photographs of undisclosed origin which showed not only the barges but several other Soviet vessels allegedly operating out of Cuba. He said these were unclassified and suggested the Chairman make use of these rather than risk compromising our sensitive recon material.

6. Rivers asked a number of questions along the line of who was doing the actual construction work (Russians or Cubans), whether some areas were "off limits" to Cubans, and whether the Russians had completely taken over some of the old Cuban naval facilities or were simply using them on an occasional basis. I said I couldn't answer these questions definitively but would try to get the answers and keep the Chairman informed through our regular briefings of Slatinshek as the picture unfolded.

7. Finally the Chairman and Slatinshek wanted to be sure that they saw any additional up-to-date photographs as soon as available, and were promptly briefed on any other new developments.

8. As I departed I again emphasized the sensitivity of the material we had discussed. Rivers said everybody else had been talking about it and he didn't see why he couldn't. I said I realized most of the story had been made public one way or another but in any event I must urge him to protect the fact that he had been briefed by Agency representatives since we could really be in trouble if it became known. I asked that he be particularly careful not to reveal inadvertently to Kissinger, who I understood he might be seeing about the problem, that we had been discussing it with him. He said we could "trust him one hundred percent."

9. During our discussion Slatinshek backed me up vigorously regarding the security angle and, after we left the Chairman, Slatinshek said he would do all he could to "keep a leash on him."

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JOHN M. MAURY
Legislative Counsel

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